Buffalo Ranch (Urbanus Square)
2418 MacArthur Boulevard
Irvine
Orange County
California

HABS No. CA-2395

HABS
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30-IRV,
2-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Western Region
Department of the Interior
San Francisco, California 94107

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

BUFFALO RANCH (URBANUS SQUARE)

HABS No. CA-2395

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CAL
30-IRV,
2-

Location:

2418 MacArthur Boulevard
Irvine
Orange County
California

U.S.G.S. Tustin Quadrangle (7.5)
Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates:
11. 420,140E. 3721,240N

Present Owner:

The Irvine Company
550 Newport Center Drive
Newport Beach, CA 92658-8904

Present Use:

Vacant

Significance:

The prime period of significance of Buffalo Ranch (Urbanus Square) is 1962-1975, the period of its association with William Pereira. The prior use of the site was as part of the Buffalo Ranch theme attraction. As part of the Section 106 process, the site has been determined eligible to the National Register of Historic Places by the State Office of Historic Preservation. Though it is less than fifty years old, there is a sufficient body of knowledge to establish that it is of exceptional importance due to its association with architect and planner William Pereira and his planning efforts in Orange County. Pereira used this site to execute one of his most notable achievements, the planning of Irvine. While he worked at other sites in Southern California, Urbanus Square is the one most closely associated with Pereira's master planning work in Orange County. Pereira may become recognized as one of the most prolific architects and planners in the last fifty years. His body of work includes major institutions throughout the nation and planning studies which changed the urban form of Southern California.

PART I. PHYSICAL SETTING AND DESCRIPTION OF BUFFALO RANCH (URBANUS SQUARE)

Setting

The buildings which comprise the Buffalo Ranch (Urbanus Square) complex are located at 2418 MacArthur Boulevard (on the northeast corner of MacArthur Boulevard and Ford Road) in Irvine. The main structure is made up of several components which are situated on a north to south axis. The complex is irregular in plan, a configuration created by the addition of multiple buildings over the course of its development.

The main building is constructed around a barn and silo. From 1962 to 1975, when architect William Pereira maintained an office here, wings were added to the north, south, and east. In addition to the main building, a large rectangular structure called the Peartree Building (Building P) is located to the northwest of the main structure, across a dirt and gravel road. Structures on the site are one story, with the exception of the original two story barn structure and three story silo.

Other features of the site include a landscaped front lawn surrounded by a painted wood rail fence; a grass covered east lawn; a fenced corral to the east of the main structure with an outbuilding for hay storage; sheds and a concrete foundation slab, an area which may have been used for test pours of the tilt-up wall materials used for the library at UC Irvine. Surrounding land to the north, east and west slopes into ravines and is planted with natural vegetation.

Physical Description

For purposes of this report, the main complex of buildings is divided into fourteen parts which have been lettered for reference. The only buildings extant from the Buffalo Ranch use of the site are the Buffalo Ranch Building (Building F) and the Buffalo Silo Building (Building G) and possibly Lunch Room and Library (Building N) which was on-site when Pereira leased the property in 1962. It was relocated to its present location in 1965. The remaining buildings date from Pereira's use of the site, although at least four buildings were relocated to the site. Furthermore, as indicated below alterations to the buildings have occurred.

Garage (Building A)

Garage (Building A) is a one story vernacular structure of wood frame construction with multiple layers of wood siding on the exterior. The building is the southernmost part of the overall building assemblage and is connected to Office Building (Building B) at its northwest corner.

Square in plan, it is built on a concrete slab on grade. The structure has an overhanging gable roof with exposed rafter tails, an open soffit and fascia board. The roof and ridge cap are clad with composition shingles.

The exterior is clad with various types of siding, including board and batten; rough sawn and kerfed; and grooved wood. Fenestration includes a single pane fixed window, a pair of square aluminum sliding windows, and an aluminum sliding door. Openings are surrounded by thin, plain wood moulding. There is a wood deck with a trellis on the east elevation.

Office Building (Building B)

Office Building (Building B) is a one story vernacular structure of wood frame construction with a board and batten wood exterior. The building is located to the northeast of Garage (Building A), and to the southwest of Office Building (Building C) to which it is attached by a narrow rectangular enclosure, formerly an open deck. The building is raised above grade and is supported by wood posts on angled concrete piers. Exposed floor framing consists of two perimeter sill beams which rest on an exposed support structure of 2" x 6" floor joists running in an east to west direction. The joists rest on 4" x 10" floor beams running in a north to south direction. Rectangular in plan, it has an overhanging gable roof with exposed rafter tails, an open soffit and fascia board, which partially conceals the ends of the rafter tails. The roof is clad with composition shingles.

The main architectural features of Office Building (Building B) are located on the west (front) and north (gable end) elevations, and consist of similar sized rectangular fenestration surrounded by simple wood trim. Window and door types include single pane and multiple pane wood casement, and aluminum sliding doors. The wood siding has been altered numerous times and the wood battens are spaced widely apart.

Office Building (Building C)

Office Building (Building C) is a rectangular wing which runs north to south and is located to the east of Office Building (Building B), Office Building (Building D), Main Entrance (Building E), and Buffalo Ranch Building (Building F). It is a one story structure of wood frame construction with a combination of wood board and batten type siding exteriors and multiple gable roofs clad in composition and asphalt shingles. The north end adjoins the southeast corner of the two story gambrel structure. A portion of the structure sits on a concrete slab on grade.

Office Building (Building D)

Office Building (Building D) is a one story vernacular structure of wood frame construction with post and beam framing and board and batten type infill panels. It is located to the west of Office Building (Building C) and to the south of Main Entrance (Building E). Rectangular in plan, it has a low pitched gable roof with exposed rafter tails. An exposed ridge beam and plate beams project beyond the roof overhang on the west gable end. The building is raised from grade and is supported by two 2" x 8" sill beams resting on wood posts on angled concrete piers. The upper 2" x 8" beam contains rectangular openings which contain wire mesh. A single three panel door with glass panels is located on the west elevation. Windows are aluminum sliders.

Main Entrance (Building E)

Main Entrance (Building E) is the main entrance to the complex. Located between Office Building (Building D) and Buffalo Ranch Building (Building F), and to the west of Office Building (Building C), the one story wing consists of a symmetrical west elevation of multiple light (2 x 8) doors and windows recessed in an open gable porch framed by a wood trellis. It is one of the newest components on the site.

Buffalo Ranch Building (Building F)

Buffalo Ranch Building (Building F) is the main building in the complex. Rectangular in plan, it is a two story vernacular barnlike structure of wood frame construction with a board and batten wood exterior and a gambrel roof. Attached to the main structure is a rectangular one story wood structure with a minimal overhanging shed roof. The roofs are clad with composition shingles. The structure rests on wood sill beams which sit on concrete squares flush with grade.

Fenestration includes fixed and sliding window assemblies on the one story structure and multiple pane double hung sash windows on the two story structure. Shed dormers with paired windows are located on the north and south elevations of the gambrel roof. Wood doors contain three glazed panels. Windows and doors are surrounded by simple, flat wood trim.

Buffalo Ranch Silo Building (Building G)

Buffalo Ranch Silo Building (Building G) is a one story vernacular wood structure located to the north of the two story structure. This portion of the building encompasses the silo. Architectural details include a stone fireplace with a large metal chimney cap located at the northeast corner, wide double hung sash windows, exposed wood truss

work, and a wood gutter and downspout assembly. Rectangular in plan, it has an overhanging gable roof with exposed rafter tails, an open soffit with exposed roof decking, and a projecting ridge beam on the north elevation. The roof is clad with composition shingles.

The three story circular tower or "silo" projects from the structure and is of wood frame construction with a composition shingle exterior. The dome roof is clad in wood shingles and is without any finish detailing at the soffit. A continuous band of rectangular single pane and jalousie windows is located on the third floor level. Additions to the east of this structure have enclosed east elevation.

A patio paved in a combination of quarry paver tiles, brick and concrete is located to the west (front) of Buffalo Ranch Silo Building (Building G). It contains a large tree which obscures most of the west elevation of the structure. Another patio to the north is enclosed by Garage Building (Building H), Office Building (Building I), and Connecting Building (Building M) and is paved in quarry tile.

Buffalo Ranch Building (Building F) and Buffalo Ranch Silo Building (Building G) form an "L"-shaped complex which is the nucleus of the entire building assemblage. As the main structure grew, buildings were added to the north, east and south elevations of these original structures.

Garage (Building H)

Garage (Building H) is a one story vernacular structure of wood frame construction with a stucco exterior and wood batten detailing. The building is located to the north of Buffalo Ranch Silo Building (Building G) and separated by a narrow entryway, and is attached to Office Building (Building I) at its northeast corner. Square in plan and raised off the ground, it has a gable roof with exposed rafter tails and open soffit with exposed tongue and groove roof deck, and wide gable end fascia boards. Fenestration includes two single pane square windows, a double hung sash window, and a wood door with two glass panels.

Office Building (Building I)

Office Building (Building I) is a raised one story vernacular structure of wood frame construction with a stucco exterior and wood batten detail. It is located to the north of Buffalo Ranch Silo Building (Building G) and connected to the one story wing by the corridor of Connecting Building (Building M). Rectangular in plan, it has a gable roof with exposed rafter tails and wide gable end fascia boards. The structure is located on a slope which exposes the support structure of wood posts resting on concrete piers on

the north and west elevations. Windows are double hung sash. Alterations include the installation of metal security grilles on most windows. The north entry door is flush panel wood which is reached by a wood stair and rails.

Office Building (Building J)

Office Building (Building J) is a raised one and a half story structure of wood frame construction with exterior cladding of wood siding and wood shingles. There is an exposed fireplace chimney wall on the north elevation as well as a wood deck and stair partially covered by a simple wood roof structure clad in composition shingles. The structure itself has a shed roof and is also clad in composition shingles. Fenestration includes wood and glass doors and single pane and casement windows.

Office Building and Shop (Building K)

Office Building and Shop (Building K) is a raised one story structure of wood frame construction with a panelled wood exterior. This building is located to the northeast of Office Building (Building J) and to the north of Office Building (Building L). Rectangular in plan, it has an overhanging flat roof with a deep fascia parapet. Exposed floor beams and joists rest on wood posts and concrete piers. Fenestration includes a five panel wood door with glass panels, a wide aluminum sliding door, tall jalousie window assemblies on the east elevation and clerestory arched windows on the south elevation which reflect the interior arched ceiling.

Office Building (Building L)

Office Building (Building L) is a one story structure of wood frame construction on concrete foundation walls with a board and batten exterior. This building is located to the east of Office Building (Building J) and to the south of Office Building and Shop (Building K). Square in plan, it has a shed roof clad in composition shingles. Large rectangular aluminum sliding windows are surrounded by thin wood moulding. A covered porch is located at the intersection of Office Building (Building I), Office Building (Building J), Office Building (Building L), and Connecting Building (Building M).

Connecting Building (Building M)

Connecting Building (Building M) is a one story linear structure of wood frame construction with glass infill which runs north to south and connects the south elevation of Office Building (Building I) to the east elevation of Buffalo Ranch Silo Building (Building G). Rectangular in plan, it has a flat roof clad in composition roofing. Double doors constructed of wood and glass with multiple panels on the east elevation open onto the rear yard; a similar pair on the west elevation open to a courtyard.

Lunch Room and Library (Building N)

Lunch Room and Library (Building N) is a one story vernacular structure of wood frame construction with a board and batten exterior. It is located to the northeast of the two story portion of Buffalo Ranch Building (Building F), essentially centered to the east of the silo tower. Rectangular in plan, it has a high pitched gable roof clad in composition shingles. The overhang of the roof is minimal. Fenestration includes large rectangular single pane fixed windows on the north and south elevations and two sets of sliding glass doors on the east gable elevation. A rectangular concrete patio is located to the east of the building.

Peartree Building (Building P)

The Peartree Building (Building P) is separated from the main complex by a dirt and gravel roadway, and sits on a level pad below the level of the parking lot to the west of the main structure. This one and a half story vernacular structure is constructed of wood framing on a concrete slab on grade with a board and batten and plywood siding wood exterior. Rectangular in plan, it has an overhanging medium pitched gable roof clad in composition shingles. A cross gable is located on the east elevation, and the south gable end features paired aluminum sliding windows at a mezzanine level.

Exposed rafter tails are partially concealed by a fascia board on the west elevation, and fully exposed on the east elevation which does not have a fascia board. The gable end fascia boards are wide enough to cover the depth of the roof deck and joists (rafters). Roof decking is diagonal within the walls of the structure, but parallel with the edge of the roof on the east and west elevations in the open soffit. The east cross gable end is composed of horizontal wood louvers.

East and west fenestration is regular and composed of three panel glazed double doors surrounded by simple wood trim. The door assembly under the east gable is modified to accommodate toilet rooms. Doors are flush panel with louvers. Surrounding site features include a wide brick walkway flush with the structure on the west elevation with concrete steps up to the parking lot, and a concrete sidewalk on the east elevation.

Other Buildings

Additional outbuildings include a Tool Shed (Building Q); a one story wood vernacular structure with overhanging shed roof; and the buffalo shelter enclosure, a minimal structure of wood construction with a corrugated metal roof.

BUILDINGS AT URBANUS SQUARE

BLDG	TYPE	DATE	COMMENTS	SOURCES
A	Relocated	1967	Relocated Garage, Los Alamitos Blvd	Permit #37536
B	Relocated	1965	Relocated Construction Site Office, UCI Campus	Permit #24181 Assessor
C	Relocated	1965	Relocated Construction Site Office, UCI Campus	Permit #23812
D	---	No Date		
E	New	1967	Reception area designed by Pereira	Permit #37899
F	On-Site	c. 1955	Buffalo Ranch building	Aerial/Assessor
G	On-Site	c. 1958	Built around Buffalo Ranch Silo	Aerial/Assessor
H	Relocated	1967	Relocated Garage, Linwood St., Santa Ana	Permit #37003
I	Relocated	1968	Relocated Office, Carmenita Rd., Artesia	Permit #46177
J	---	No Date		
K	---	No Date		
L	---	No Date		
M	New	1967	Built by Pereira	Permit #37836
N	On-Site Relocated	1965	Appears to be Buffalo Ranch building relocated by Pereira for use as lunch room and library	1962 Lease Permit
P	New	c. 1964	Built by Pereira	Aerial/Interview

PART II. SITE HISTORY AND CONTEXT

History

The present site is a part of the historic Rancho San Joaquin, a Mexican land grant awarded to Jose Andreas Sepulveda in the 1830s. In 1864, the rancho was purchased by the Flint, Bixby and Company, in partnership with James Irvine, an Irishman who had become a successful commodities merchant in San Francisco and accumulated substantial real estate investments. The partnership intended to use the land to graze sheep, and the ranch became the leading center of wool production in Southern California in the 1860s and 1870s. The partnership also acquired adjacent land grants for a total of 88,000 acres, thus extending its holdings from the Pacific Ocean to the Santa Ana Mountains. In 1876, James Irvine became sole owner of the ranch, and in 1893 his son, James Harvey Irvine, received full title to the property.

In the 1890s the ranch made the transition from a grazing operation to a major agricultural business. Agriculture was to remain the primary use of the land throughout the first half of the twentieth century. Lima beans and barley were two major crops, along with tomatoes, lettuce, and other vegetables. James Irvine created a successful sugar beet operation, along with citrus production. By the 1940s, the Irvine Ranch was one of the largest and most productive farming businesses in California.

Uses of the land in Orange County began to change in the postwar decades as thousands of new residents flocked to the area. Increasing demand for housing placed pressures on the company to develop. Construction of the Santa Ana Freeway opened the region to industry from Los Angeles, providing a new source of jobs and workers looking for nearby housing. Builders proceeded to acquire vast areas of farmland for subdivision north of the Irvine Ranch. Continued use of the Irvine Ranch for predominantly agricultural purposes until the early 1960s limited the development of South Orange County to coastal areas.

Buffalo Ranch In Context

To evaluate the significance of Buffalo Ranch as a theme attraction it is necessary to establish its context within Orange County, a region which became known for its entertainment and recreation facilities, including Newport Harbor, Knott's Berry Farm and Disneyland.

Theme Park Development In Orange County

Theme parks in the United States were an outgrowth of the "pleasure gardens" of 19th century Europe. In the late nineteenth century, rides, games, and attractions were added to parks and picnic areas. New York's Coney Island developed a carnival atmosphere. The use of fantasy architecture created the ambiance for the attraction. Thrill rides were added and attractions with such names as Steeplechase Park, Luna Park, and Dreamland kept Coney Island active into the 1940s and 1950s (Kyriazi 1976:39-46).

Southern California had a long tradition of exotic attractions for tourist and residents alike. From the funiculars of Mount Lowe and Angels Flight to the amusements of the beach resorts to exotic animal farms and zoos, the promoters of Los Angeles and Orange Counties offered the public a variety of entertainment and recreational opportunities.

On the West Coast, Orange County became the center of theme park development in Southern California -- and perhaps the nation -- following World War II. This resulted from an evolution that began in the 1930s with the development of Newport Harbor and Knott's Berry Farm.

Newport Beach became the first area in Orange County to develop tourist attractions. In 1935 preliminary plans were drawn for a Coney Island type amusement park in Upper Newport Harbor known as "Joyland". This park was to have a picnic pavilion, an indoor swimming pool, playgrounds, chimes tower, swimming and boating lagoons, aquarium, adult and children's game areas, and plaza (Tilten and Hull 1935). Although Joyland was never constructed, by 1939 many of its concepts had been incorporated into development of Balboa Island and Newport Harbor.

In 1939 the Newport Chamber of Commerce map highlighted the tourist and resort benefits of Newport Harbor, Balboa, and Lido Bay Harbor. (Newport Harbor Chamber of Commerce, 1939). Development of Newport Harbor brought tourists and residents from Los Angeles County to Orange County on weekends. The roads leading to Newport were well-traveled.

Knott's Berry Farm

Walter Knott moved to Buena Park in 1923 (Holmes and Bailey 1956:96). He leased a farm to plant berries and set up a roadside stand on Beach Road. His major market was the motorists on their way to Newport Harbor from the Los Angeles area. In 1927 he bought the ten acres of the ground he had been leasing. By the early 1930s the berry stand was doing very well as people drove from the inland areas to beach resorts around Newport. The Knotts opened a chicken restaurant in 1934 to meet the demand of regional tourists who sought food and the "new" boysenberries (Holmes and Bailey 1956:106-108). By 1937 the restaurant was open year round and people waited in long lines to eat dinner.

To provide entertainment during the wait, Walter Knott hired a Hollywood designer to create a "cyclorama" which featured an ode to western pioneers. In 1940 Knott began construction of his Ghost Town, a collection of authentic western frontier buildings brought in from other locations, reconstructions, and replicas (Holmes and Bailey 1956: 123-132).

By 1942 the Knotts were serving 5,000 dinners on Sundays. Attractions included a North Rock Garden, redwood trunk slab, old stagecoach, Ghost Town, outdoor field mounts, and the original cyclorama. By 1946 the Berry Farm had a chapel, 200 acre truck farm, 7 dining rooms seating 880 guests, and was opening a steak house to serve traditional beef and buffalo steaks. By 1954 they had served 1.4 million meals and attractions included a produce market and gift shops, Indian Village with dance performances, trolley cars to the parking lot, an "Old MacDonald's Farm" petting zoo, and Ghost Town. Within the Ghost Town were a gold mine, Calico Saloon, schoolhouse, grist mill, blacksmith, the Bird Cage Theatre, burro rides, train rides, stagecoach rides, picture gallery, Nellie-Dulcimer, cyclorama, and the wagon camp-sing along show (Gibson 1954). By 1956 three million tourists visited the Ghost Town annually (Holmes and Bailey 1956:133).

In addition to Knotts Berry Farm, Southern California boasted of Venice Beach, the Balboa Fun Zone, The Pike at Long Beach, Santa Monica Pier, and Belmont Park in San Diego (Kyriazi 1976:136). In Orange County, Newport Harbor and Knott's Berry Farm continued to be popular.

Disneyland

The greatest of all post war amusement parks was, of course, Disneyland. Disneyland was a product of a definite time, and was a reflection of the post-war optimism. Its success was largely due to its affiliation with Hollywood and the media. By 1951 Disney was interested in developing a wholesome, family attraction that would teach children about their cultural heritage, history, and folklore (Findlay 1992:55-59,66; Burns and Snow 1991).

Disney believed in using themes in order to unify and structure an amusement park. Using entertainment, he believed he could interest the public in learning about the history, culture, and geography of the country. The park was not considered to be a potentially great money maker but primarily an advertising vehicle. Disneyland quickly captured the imagination of a generation, much as the fanciful electric arcades of Coney Island had done at the turn of the century in New York. This success, thanks to television, was on a national scale (Findlay 1992:55-59,66; Burns and Snow 1991).

Stanford Research Institute was hired in June 1953 to pick a site for Mr. Disney's dream kingdom, an idea which he had been formulating since 1948. Originally, the park was to be located on studio property in Burbank and utilized for making TV shows and movies (Moeller 1980a:1). The institute narrowed the alternative sites to San Fernando, Pomona, and Orange County. Orange County was chosen for to its accessibility due to construction of the new Santa Ana Freeway. Two sites in Orange County were considered: the first near Knott's Berry Farm, and a second near Anaheim. The Anaheim site was preferred due to its closer location to the freeway. Disney purchased the land in the spring of 1954, and Anaheim annexed the property in early 1955 to provide services. The park opened in July of 1955.

Disneyland's national advertisement and promotion from its television show helped cement Southern California as the clear vacation choice of the post-war family. Knott's Berry Farm, local beaches, Hollywood, Forest Lawn, Marineland, and the San Diego Zoo were marketed as vacation destinations for the automobile powered nation (Findlay 1992:95).

Disneyland has contributed to the growing "tourist and visitor industry" in the county. In 1959 Orange County realized $70-90 million in tourism from all over the U.S. (Disneyland 1959). A 1959 report by Luckman and Associates noted that Disneyland was the stimulus and nucleus for a new kind of resort and tourist area. Plans were made to promote development of compatible uses in the surrounding area.

Buffalo Ranch

In 1954 another Western theme attraction opened in Orange County called "Buffalo Ranch" in Newport Beach. Buffalo Ranch was developed on a "wild west" theme. The park may have been inspired by Knott's Berry Farm's success; many of its themes were similar. It was established after Knott's, and did not achieve the prosperity of other attractions located in the Buena Park/Anaheim area.

Gene Clark and Roy Shipley obtained a lease from The Irvine Company in 1954. Clark imported approximately 100 head of bison from his ranch in Kansas. Visitors could drive through the ranch on an unfenced, paved auto trail and experience the feeling of the West. An Indian camp and a trading post was operated by the Porters of Arizona. Harold Porter was then a resident of San Clemente and a nationally renowned saddle and western wear maker.

The office, tackroom, and bunkhouse area was at the entrance to the buffalo range. One quarter mile from this area was the Indian village. Horse, burro and hayrides were provided and a chuckwagon restaurant served western style buffalo steak meals (Hastings 1955:6-7).

Promotional brochures of the 1950s called the site "The West's Largest Buffalo Ranch", and gave the address as Corona del Mar. Listed were such attractions as the buffalo herd, a ride-on fire truck, horseback rides and lessons, miniature train and tractor rides, a western movie set, the Indian Village - Tradum Store, burro and pony rides, archery lessons, the Lil' Bucko Speedway, birthday parties, a cafe to serve buffalo burgers and barbecue, picnic grounds, Porter's Western Store, and riding stables (Sherman Library Collection).

Reenactments of western lore and events were performed in a Western town set. Shows were set up for clubs, groups, and private parties. The archery shop gave private lessons, group instruction, and organized shoots every other Sunday. Hayrides, western dances, and barbecues were organized. The Barnyard had a petting zoo that included goats, chickens, geese, ducks, pheasants, peacocks and pigeons for children. A shop called "Nancy's" sold candy, sweets, and jellies and jam. Picnic ground facilities were provided free for scout groups and other parties.

Chief Push-Ma-Ta-Ha told authentic Indian stories and conducted pow-wows. Chief Kuhle Geronimo III, grandson of Geronimo, worked as caretaker of the buffalo herd. He also did promotional work at schools and groups for the ranch (Santa Ana Register 2/9/55).

A 1957 tourist attraction map includes Buffalo Ranch among other attractions and touts Orange County as "an ideal vacationland" (Freeland 1957). The 1958 Map and Street Guide to Newport Beach, Costa Mesa, and Newport Harbor area features the Ranch and highlights its convenient parking lot on the east side of MacArthur Road at the junction of Ford and MacArthur.

For five years, the Ranch entertained thousands of visitors. While it never achieved the prominence of Knotts Berry Farm, it was one of several entertainment oriented amusements that formed a part of the tourism industry in Orange County in the 1950s. The attraction closed late in 1959.

Urbanus Square and William Pereira

Urbanus Square is the name given to the Buffalo Ranch site by architect and planner, William L. Pereira. Starting in 1962, this was his base of operations for much of his planning work and its execution for the University of California and the "new town" of Irvine conceived during the late 1950s and early 1960s. He was active at this site until the mid-70s and his association with it lasted until 1984.

Pereira's Early Career

Pereira was born on April 25, 1909 in Chicago. He was influenced by his uncle who was an architect, and developed an interest in architecture at a very young age. In high school he drew for student publications, posters, and theatrical sets. He also worked as an architects' assistant, drafting and making watercolor sketches of building projects. Pereira's brother, Hal, was also interested in architecture, and became a respected motion picture art director and art consultant. Pereira was educated at the University of Illinois with a major in architecture and a minor in physics. He worked his way through college with several jobs, including painting scenery and sketching for a mimeograph service. He won the first medal of the New York Beaux Arts School of Design for a student design for a sports palace.

Within a few months of graduating with a B.S. degree in June 1930, he went to work for Holabird & Root, a prominent Chicago architectural firm. There he worked on a large public redevelopment project and the drafting of the master plan for the 1933 Chicago World's Fair. After opening his own firm in 1932, he worked on several of the exposition's buildings. This connection between planning and later design work would last throughout his half-century long career. He entered 25 industrial design competitions in the 1933 Chicago exposition and won 22.

Theaters and Hollywood

By the age of 25, Pereira had designed or remodeled movie theaters in 26 states, the majority for the Midwestern theater chain of Balaban & Katz, which was controlled by Paramount. Because of his movie theater designs, he was given the opportunity to submit sketches for a new studio in Hollywood for Paramount. He conducted extensive research on film production in order to design the studio. Pereira not only got the job of designing the Paramount studio, but was also given the position of art director. The Paramount studio project, however, was apparently never executed.

Pereira moved to Los Angeles in 1938. Though he maintained his architecture practice in the Midwest, his focus was increasingly on his movie work at Paramount. In 1942 he shared an Oscar for special effects photography on Cecil B. DeMille's "Reap the Wind". He went on to work as a producer on two films at RKO studios. As a California architect, he won awards from the American Institute of Architects (AIA) for his designs of the Motion Picture Country Home and Hospital in Woodland Hills and the Pan Pacific Theater. In 1949 he gave up his film work and became a professor of architecture at the University of Southern California (USC), a position he held until 1957, while maintaining his architecture practice.

Pereira and Luckman

In 1950, his former college classmate Charles Luckman joined the firm after a successful business career as an executive with Lever Brothers. Within five years Pereira & Luckman grew from an office of 12 architects and a $1.5 million volume of work to a firm with 400 employees and more than $500 million worth of work. Together, Pereira and Luckman worked on CBS Television City (1952) in Hollywood, a suburban San Diego hospital, two tanks which duplicated undersea conditions for Marineland of the Pacific (1954), and a 450-room hotel for Disneyland.

The Pereira and Luckman firm developed a specialty in master planning for complexes such as Cape Canaveral's rocket complex; the expansion of Los Angeles International Airport (LAX); jet bases in California for Lockheed, North American Northrop and Convair; UC Santa Barbara; and the National Bureau of Standards laboratories in Boulder, Colorado. In 1958 Pereira left the partnership with Luckman and opened his own firm called William L. Pereira Associates.

The Master Planner

According to Time Magazine in 1963, which featured him on the cover, William Pereira was one of "a new breed of artisans arising in the world: the regional planner." He was one of several architect/planners who master planned large projects, including architect Victor Gruen, who planned El Dorado Hills in the Sacramento area and Laguna Niguel; architects Whitney Smith and Wayne Williams who planned California City; and architect Welton Beckett who designed Century City.

In 1957, prior to his split with Luckman, the Regents of the University of California asked Pereira and Luckman to find a 1,000 acre site for a new branch of the university. Pereira retained the project when his partnership with Luckman ended. Pereira and his research team spent four months studying the university and its history and compiled a list of 23 potential sites. The Irvine Ranch was selected as the site in 1959. In 1960, Pereira submitted a plan for the general size and boundaries of the proposed university campus and a master land use map which the UC Regents and The Irvine Company agreed to follow. In September of 1960, The Irvine Company gave a 1,000 acre site to the University. An additional 510 acres were purchased by the University, thereby forming the 1,500 acre campus site. In January of 1961, the gift of land was formally presented to the UC Regents by The Irvine Company.

After the selection of the Irvine Ranch site for the University, The Irvine Company asked Pereira to create a master plan for the entire 93,000-acre ranch, which was one of the largest land development programs in the United States. The land was divided into three sections: the southern third to be developed for a population of 300,000; the middle

section to remain agricultural; and the northern portion to be developed for recreation and as a wildlife preserve. In 1965 The Irvine Company created its own design staff to assume the development's planning functions. Pereira's plan was used as the guide.

In 1964, Pereira stated that Irvine, his university town, would have the most lasting influence of anything he had done. (Business Week, 10/24/64). Pereira, who continued as a consultant on the project, believed his plan allowed for change and was a guide or policy which had the ambitious goal "to create an ideal way of life" (Los Angeles Times, 11/20/81, Pt. VIII, p.1).

The Irvine Ranch project consisted of a campus for approximately 27,000 students as the centerpiece for a town with a population of 100,000. The University was to consist of a series of quadrangles in a radial form with a huge park in the center of the university's circular plan. The campus was designed to make circulation easiest for pedestrians and bicyclists, with cars restricted outside of the central core.

The surrounding town was to provide housing for various income levels, an industrial park, hotels and amenities such as theaters, cultural resources, and recreational areas to be shared with the university. Pereira's concept was to create an integration between the university and the community. The plan proposed that a system of balanced communities that would promote social diversity and achieve a measure of economic and functional independence would develop on the surrounding land.

The first phase of the university opened in September of 1965. Pereira designed many of original university buildings, including the Fine Arts Building, the Fine Arts Village, and the Humanities Building. Pereira had approval over the design of campus structures designed by other architects, including the Library, which was designed by Quincy Jones.

The university in 1965 had an enrollment of 1589 students. Although original projections for growth have not yet materialized, enrollment reached 16,500 in 1990. The university and the town center were not built to the scale or importance Pereira had planned. Irvine does not have one central activity center, but rather, several satellite centers. In general, however, Pereira's plan has been used to guide the ongoing development of the area over the subsequent decades as groups of distinctive communities including the city of Irvine, and portions of Newport Beach, Tustin, Santa Ana, Costa Mesa, and Laguna Beach developed. Irvine retains the well designed open space, recreational opportunities, and sensitivity to the environment designed by Pereira.

Vistas From Urbanus Square

While early work was performed from the Agricultural Headquarters of the Irvine Company, permanent staff headquarters for the Irvine project was Urbanus Square. When Pereira leased the property in 1962 for the rental payment of $100 per month, the site included a barn and a silo which remained from their prior use in the 1950s as part of the Buffalo Ranch amusement park. Pereira gained control of the site in a lease from The Irvine Company, dated March 1, 1962, although preparation of the buildings for their new use may have begun a few months earlier. Pereira and his staff remodelled the barn and silo for office use. The former restaurant area of the barn from the Buffalo Ranch period served as the work space, dining area, and conference room for Pereira's staff.

Pereira is known to have had "a passion for barns" and an interest in ranch buildings. He worked regularly on the site from 1962 to about 1975. He was on the site less frequently from 1975 until the early 1980s.

During his time on the site, the complex grew as he relocated several buildings including two construction site offices from the UCI Campus in 1965 (Office Building (Building B) and Office Building (Building C)) and two garages from other areas in Orange County in 1967 (Garage (Building A) and Garage (Building H)). Pereira and his staff designed small additions to connect the various buildings (Connecting Building (Building M) and a connection between Office Building (Building B) and Office Building (Building C)) and to provide a reception area (Main Entrance (Building E)). All the buildings were painted red. Pereira built the Peartree Building (Peartree Building (Building P)), which was used as a drafting room and by Pereira's "Peartree Press", which printed the firm's promotional brochures and literature. (The word for pear tree in Portuguese is pereira.)

Between 1962 and 1975, Pereira spent about one third of his time at Urbanus Square; he maintained a bedroom in the "silo" where he would stay two to three nights at week. He generally arrived on Thursday afternoons and stayed through Saturday morning. In addition to working and reviewing his staff's ongoing work on the project, Pereira used Urbanus Square for business meetings as well as meetings with potential clients, using the site to demonstrate the large scale of the Irvine Ranch project. According to Don Cameron, a longtime architect and planner for the firm, Pereira often entertained at Urbanus Square on Friday nights, sharing with guests the "romantic setting and unique atmosphere of the site". Pereira also made brief visits to Urbanus Square at other times during the week, generally for several hours at a time.

Transportation was not always easy from Los Angeles, so staff members would often rent apartments in the area for a month or two at a time or stay brief periods in a boat kept by Pereira at Newport Beach. During this period, Pereira also maintained his main office on Wilshire Boulevard in Los Angeles.

Some of the Irvine Ranch planning work for which Pereira is known certainly occurred before he came to Urbanus Square, including the UC Irvine site selection and feasibility studies. However, much of the Irvine campus and town planning is associated with this site.

According to Founding Chancellor Dan Aldrich, the basic form of the campus plan with a ring in the center was the outgrowth of a conversation "between Clark Kerr, Pereira and me." (UCI: The First Twenty Five Years, p. 23.) Kerr had been appointed UC president at the June 1957 Regents meeting, the same meeting where it was decided to expand the system by three campuses with one to be located in East Los Angeles or Orange County. (Ibid., p. 17.) Shortly, thereafter, Pereira began the site selection work. However, Aldrich did not accept Kerr's offer to head the new campus until December 1961. He was appointed chancellor on January 19, 1962. (Ibid., pp. 22-23.) Three days earlier the Pereira firm applied for its first remodelling permit for Urbanus Square.

From Urbanus Square and its silo, Pereira could look out across the meadows and rolling hills to what would become the campus and town. In the other direction was his work at Newport Center and Fashion Island. Pereira, who expressed his concern that the "unskillful planner and the untalented developer" did not see the landscape as a natural resource, could not only survey the landscape from this site as he planned, but could view it as it was transformed.

As noted in UCI: The First Twenty-Five Years, Pereira said of Urbanus Square in 1970:

> "I'm here because I couldn't bear not seeing what is happening now. I think this is the finest laboratory of the process of true development in the world. In less than 10 years you really see the work of 100. In 30 years you will see what would normally take 300. I know of no place in the world where you could say that. (p. 61.)

At that time Urbanus Square was headquarters for 80 employees in addition to 180 employees in the Los Angeles office. According to Barbara Gray, a longtime Pereira associate and historian, Urbanus Square was very important to Pereira's work, adding that in addition to the Irvine Ranch master planning, Pereira designed Moulton Ranch, the Laguna Theater, the Golden West College site and all its buildings, and site selection of UC San Diego and the design of its spheroidal library. Samuel McCulloch, founding Dean of the School of Humanities, now Professor Emeritus and historian for UCI, also believes the site was very important to Pereira's work during this period.

In 1975, Pereira subleased a portion of the site to the First Church of Religious Science of Newport Beach. Effective July 1, 1984, Pereira's association with the site ended when he assigned his leasehold interest to William Lange.

Other Significant Planning

Pereira Associates worked on many other major projects in addition to the Irvine Ranch master plan. Just after the split with Luckman in 1958, Pereira was asked by the Lockheed Aircraft Corporation to plan a $50 million research center at Saugus, California. Other large land projects included the design of 47,000 acres on Catalina Island, largely owned by chewing gum magnate Philip Wrigley; 11,300 acres of mountains and canyons in a development called Mountain Park in the Santa Monica Mountains in Los Angeles, a series of eleven villages, including homes, schools, research and light industrial plants, and civic and shopping centers connected by public transportation to eliminate the need for cars; 5,000 acres of residential and commercial development at Bishop Ranch in California; the 75-acre Houston Center in Texas, a 32-square block "mini-city" funded by the Texas Eastern Transmission Corporation; a new town in the Ivory Coast of Africa which became known as the "African Riviera"; military bases in Spain; and an urban center in Taipei, Taiwan. Pereira hoped that this type of development on the human scale would influence the further redevelopment of Los Angeles.

History and Research

Pereira's firm became known internationally for its in depth research on the economic, environmental, and other forces involved in assuring orderly growth, functional reliability, and values beyond the current trends. Pereira also researched history. For example, to design UC Irvine and the town that was to be integrated with it, he studied universities and university towns that have developed over 2000 years. Before beginning his master plan of Catalina, Pereira visited 39 historic cities and island communities of the Mediterranean, Adriatic and Aegean Seas by yacht. Pereira's idea of regional planning was "to design plans to satisfy the future"(Los Angeles Times, 11/13/85), which he often did by studying development of the past.

In writing of his work as a planner, Pereira stated:

> History forms the very foundation of what we know about the urbanization process. You should know, therefore, that to be a "master-planner," as I am called, one must first have the nature and inclination of a historian. Because out of this knowledge comes the inescapable fact that we have neither invented nor can we deter the urbanizing process. It is a basic characteristic of the human race--and in particular wherever the movement of free men takes place. What has happened here has happened throughout the centuries. (Orange County Today, p.20.)

Pereira: Designer and Architect

Pereira designed the complex of three pavilions for the Los Angeles County Museum of Art on Wilshire Boulevard (1964), the largest museum in the West. Pereira & Associates designed many major individual buildings, including Robinson's Department Store in Pasadena (1950); the pyramidal Transamerica Corporation Building (1973) and the Pacific Mutual Life Insurance building in San Francisco; Hunt Foods Company in Fullerton; American Airlines headquarters in Dallas-Fort Worth; Union Oil Company research center in Brea; Toyota Headquarters; Irvine Towers in Irvine; Robinson's Department Store in Newport Center; the ziggurat Chet Hoifield Building for North American Rockwell in Laguna Niguel; the main library in Buena Park; the administration building for the Orange County Transit District; and a hotel and conference center in Qatar on the Persian Gulf.

Pereira designed university buildings for many campuses other than UC Irvine, including the University of Missouri, Brigham Young University, Pepperdine University in Malibu, Occidental College in Los Angeles, USC, as well as the University of California campuses at Santa Barbara, Los Angeles, and San Diego. In the early 1980s Pereira designed the Tom Bradley International Terminal in Los Angeles which opened in time for the 1984 Summer Olympics. In addition to his work on LAX and Cape Canaveral, Pereira was consulted on the design of 50 aviation projects. He also made prominent additions to historic buildings, including the Los Angeles Times Building in downtown Los Angeles and the St. Francis Hotel tower addition in San Francisco.

Service and Recognition

Pereira served on the President's National Council on the Arts from 1965 to 1968; he was chairman of the California Governor's Task Force on Transportation in 1967-68; and he served as adviser to the Aeronautics and Space Engineering Board in 1969. In 1971 Pereira was an architect in residence at the American Academy in Rome. A registered architect in 34 states, Pereira received many honors and awards, including several from the AIA; "Man of the Year" in 1967 from the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce; and honorary degrees from the Otis Art Institute, Art Center College of Design, and Pepperdine University. A Fellow of the AIA, Pereira received a Special Honor Award from the Orange County chapter of the AIA for the comprehensive master plan of the Irvine Ranch in 1982.

Pereira died on November 13, 1985 at the age of 76. At the time of his death he was working on the design of a pedestrian-oriented mini-city with a series of town squares around a central town square for an industrial and residential area in Santa Ana. According to Santa Ana's city manager at the time, the city hired Pereira because they wanted a "world class" plan. They considered him "a legend in terms of future thinking and doing master plans" (Santa Ana Register, 11/14/85).

Obituaries in Orange County, the Los Angeles Times and the New York Times, as well as Time Magazine, noted his passing and among his other numerous credits, his work as master planner in Irvine was cited in each.

Pereira's master planning work in Irvine was the subject of review in 1981 by noted architectural and urban affairs critic, Sam Hall Kaplan, then of the Los Angeles Times. Speaking of Pereira's obvious pride in his work in Irvine, Kaplan wrote:

> The project put Irvine on the map, Pereira's portrait on the cover of Time magazine's Sept 6, 1963 issue, the plan into numerous textbooks and the firm's work into demand both here and abroad. (Los Angeles Times, 9/20/81, Pt. VIII, p.1.)

Kaplan points out that Pereira's plans for campus and town center were modified and not fully implemented, resulting in a "sense of sprawl not unlike the suburbia Irvine was to improve upon". (Ibid, p.26.) "Still, with its employment base, well designed open space and recreational opportunities, Irvine stands as an exception to the unimaginative, homogenized growth that has marked most of suburban America in the last two decades," Kaplan concludes. (Ibid.)

Among other formal recognitions of the significance of his work, at least two of the projects with which he was associated have received historic designations. Cape Canaveral Air Force Station Launch Pads and Mission Control Center is a National Historic Landmark. The theme building at LAX was designated as a Historic-Cultural Monument by the City of Los Angeles.

Significance

The built form of the site is less than fifty years old and its prime period of significance is 1962-1975, the period of its association with William Pereira. The historic context statement for the Buffalo Ranch use indicates that while it is significant, it does not appear to meet the requirement of exceptional importance in the context of tourist attractions.

Buffalo Ranch (Urbanus Square) has been determined eligible to the National Register of Historic Places by the State Office of Historic Preservation which found that there is a sufficient body of knowledge to establish that it is of exceptional importance due to its association with Pereira and his planning efforts in Orange County. It is has been determined eligible under Criterion B which applies to resources associated with the lives of persons significant in our past. Architect and planner William Pereira used this site to execute one of his most notable achievements, the planning of Irvine. While he worked at other sites in Southern California, Urbanus Square is the one most closely associated with Pereira's master planning work in Orange County. Pereira may become recognized as one of the most prolific architects and planners in the last fifty years. His body of work includes major institutions throughout the nation and planning studies which changed the urban form of Southern California.

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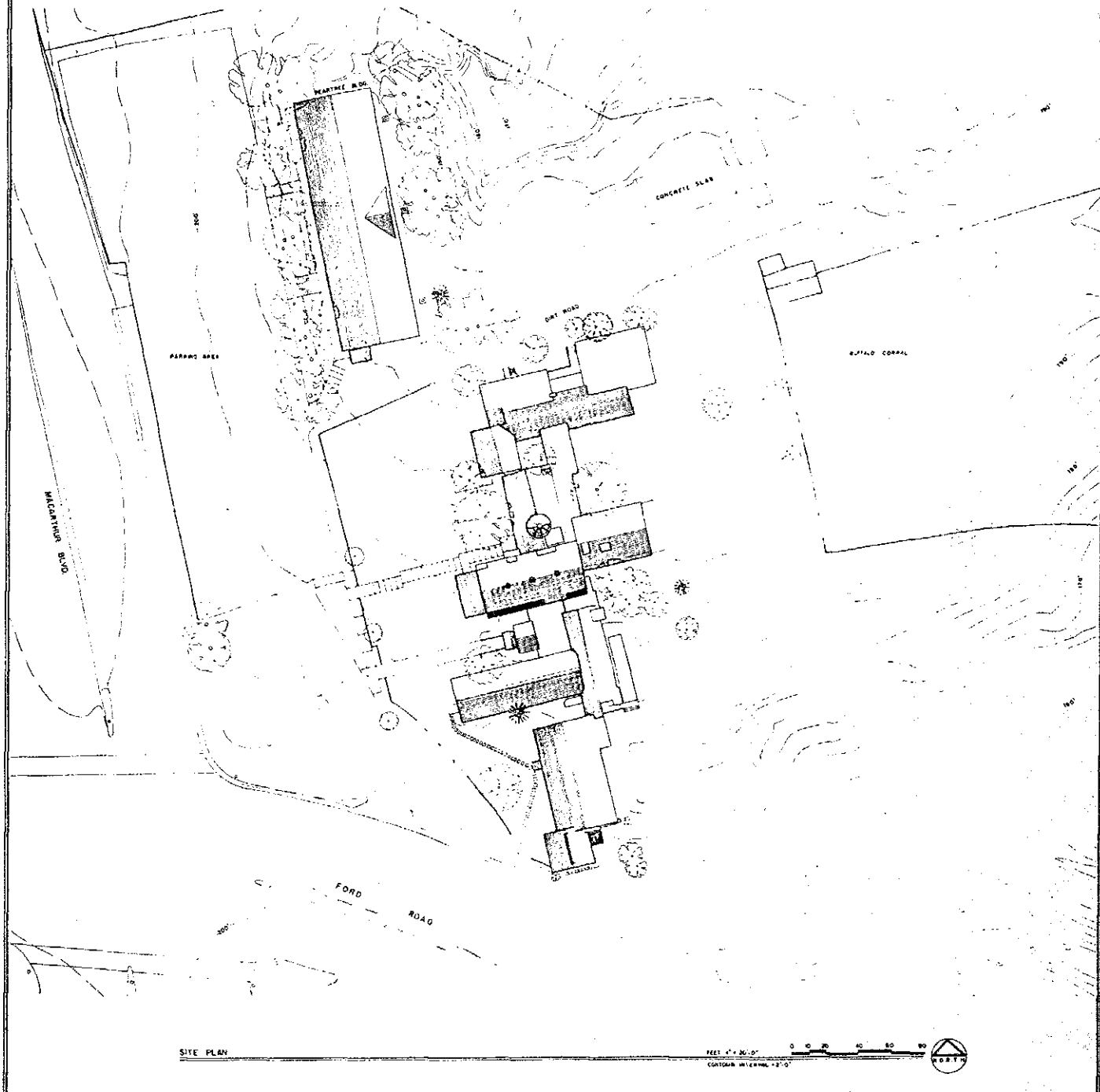
PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

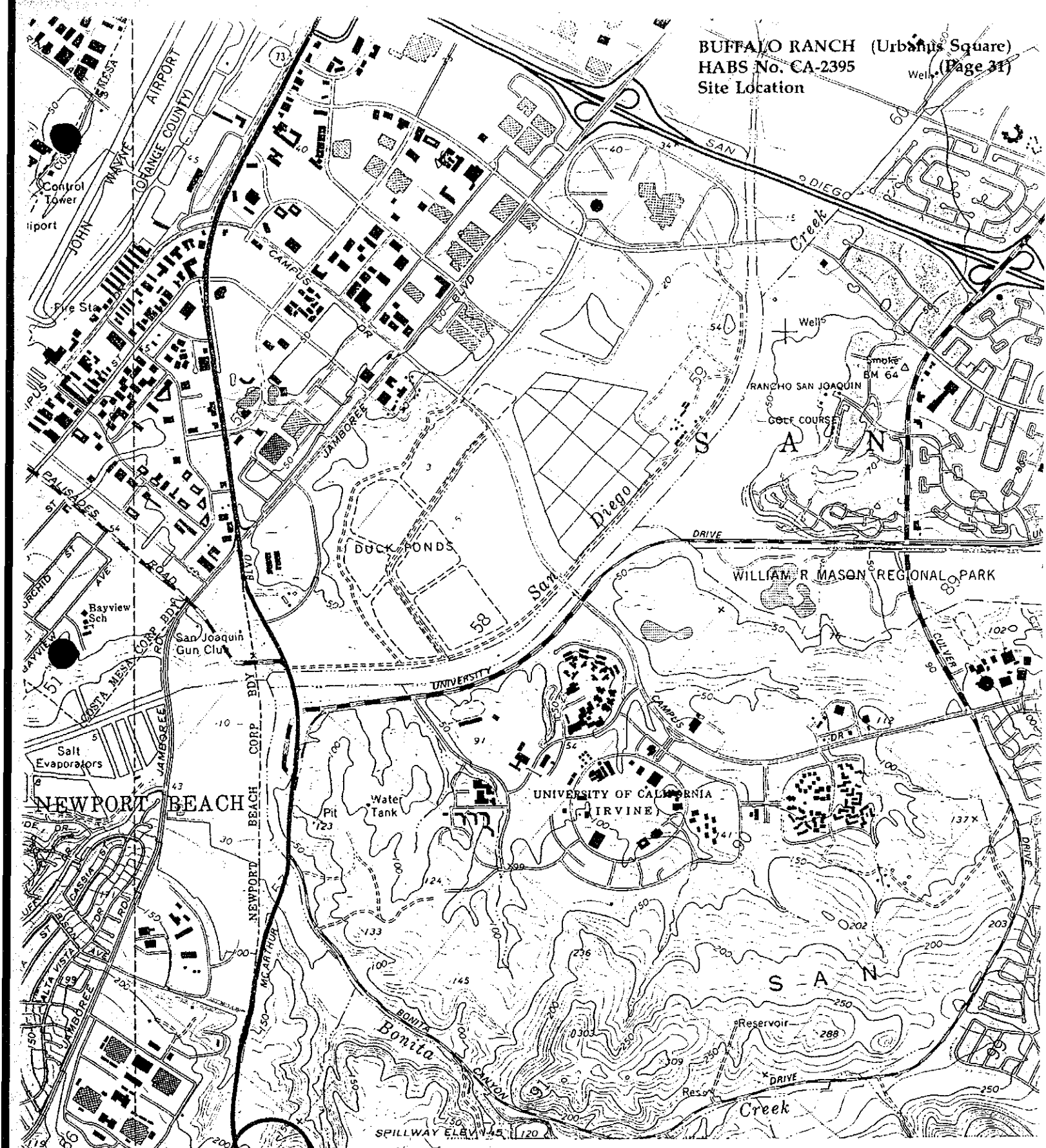
Garage (Building A) and Garage (Building B) are being relocated on site as part of the Ford Road realignment Project by the Transportation Corridor Agencies (TCA) pursuant to a Memorandum of Agreement among the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE), the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP), and the California State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO).

This HABS written report was prepared by Historic Resources Group in April 1994 for TCA and ACOE, based upon the Determination of Eligibility Report dated August 1993 which was submitted to the ACHP and SHPO. The Historic Resources Group team was led by principals, Christy Johnson McAvoy and William Delvac and included Timothy Brandt, AIA, Gordon Olschlager, AIA, Jorge Sein, and Andrea Humberger. Contextual research was performed by Steven Van Wormer and David Cameron. Large format photography was provided by William Manley.

Site Plan


MACARTHUR BLVD.
PARKING AREA
DIRT ROAD
CONCRETE SLAB
BUFFALO CORRAL
FORD ROAD
SITE PLAN
NORTH

Site Location



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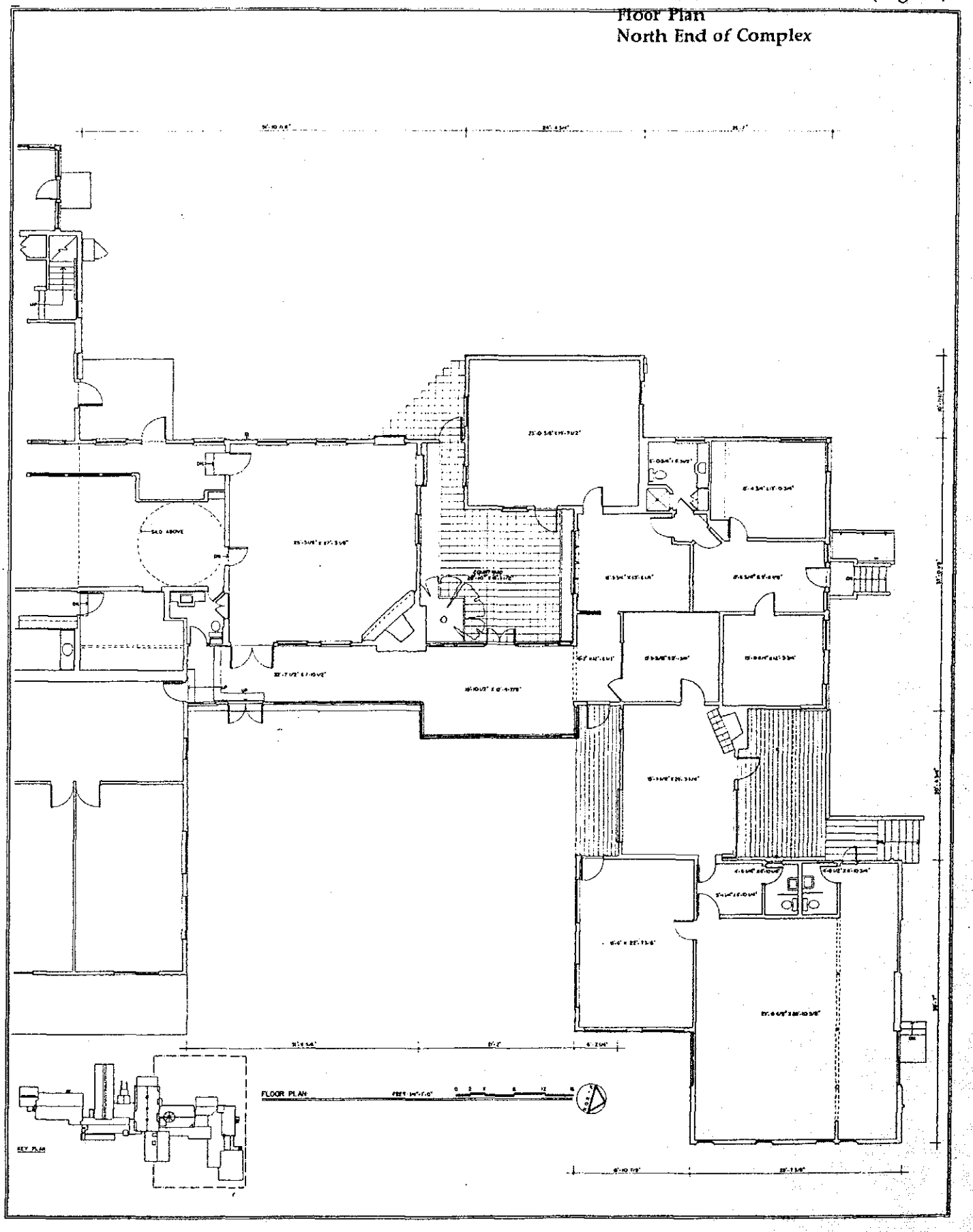
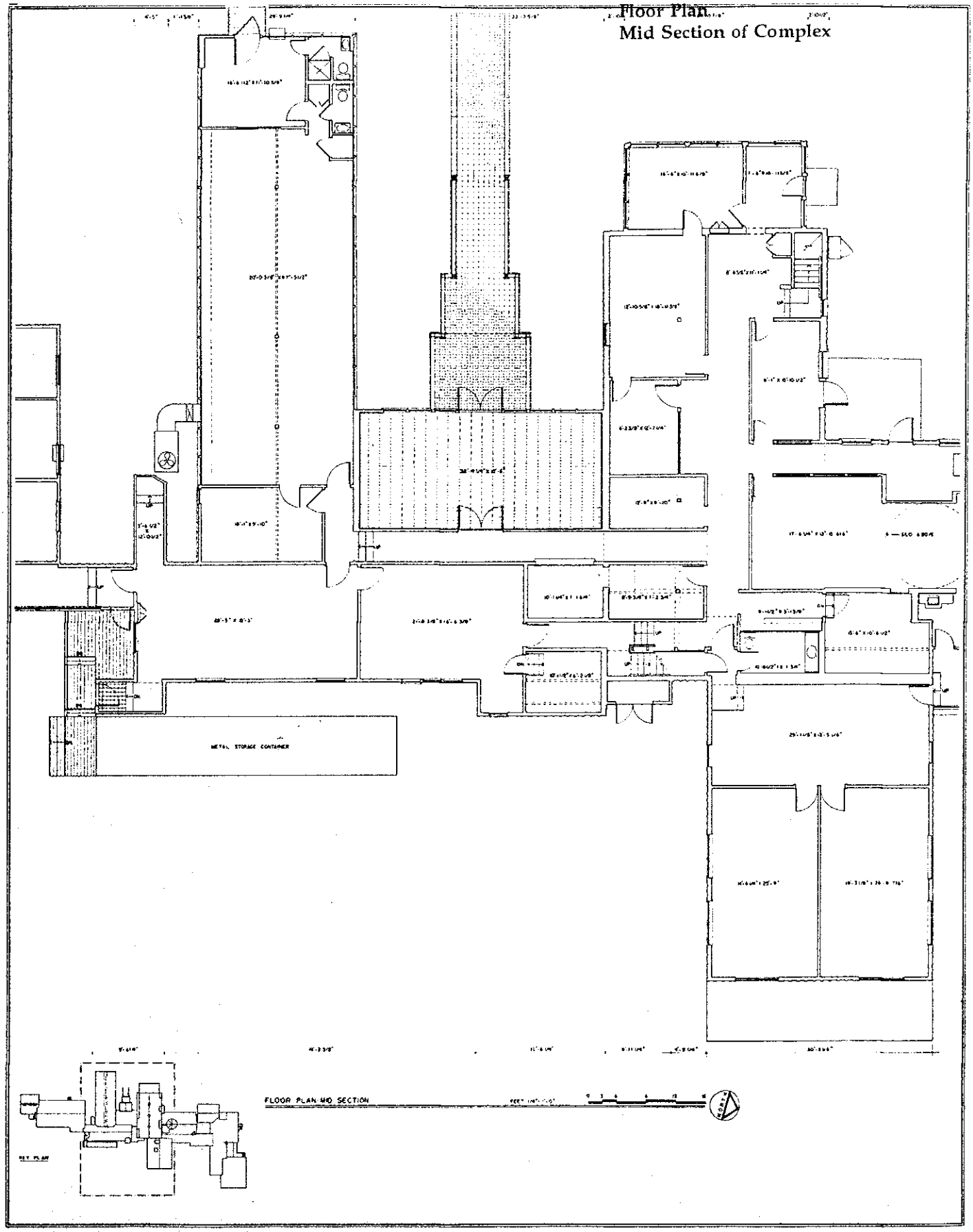
Buffalo Ranch/Urbanus Square
ORANGE COUNTY, CALIFORNIA
UNITED STATES GEOLOGICAL SURVEY TUSIN QUADRANGLE

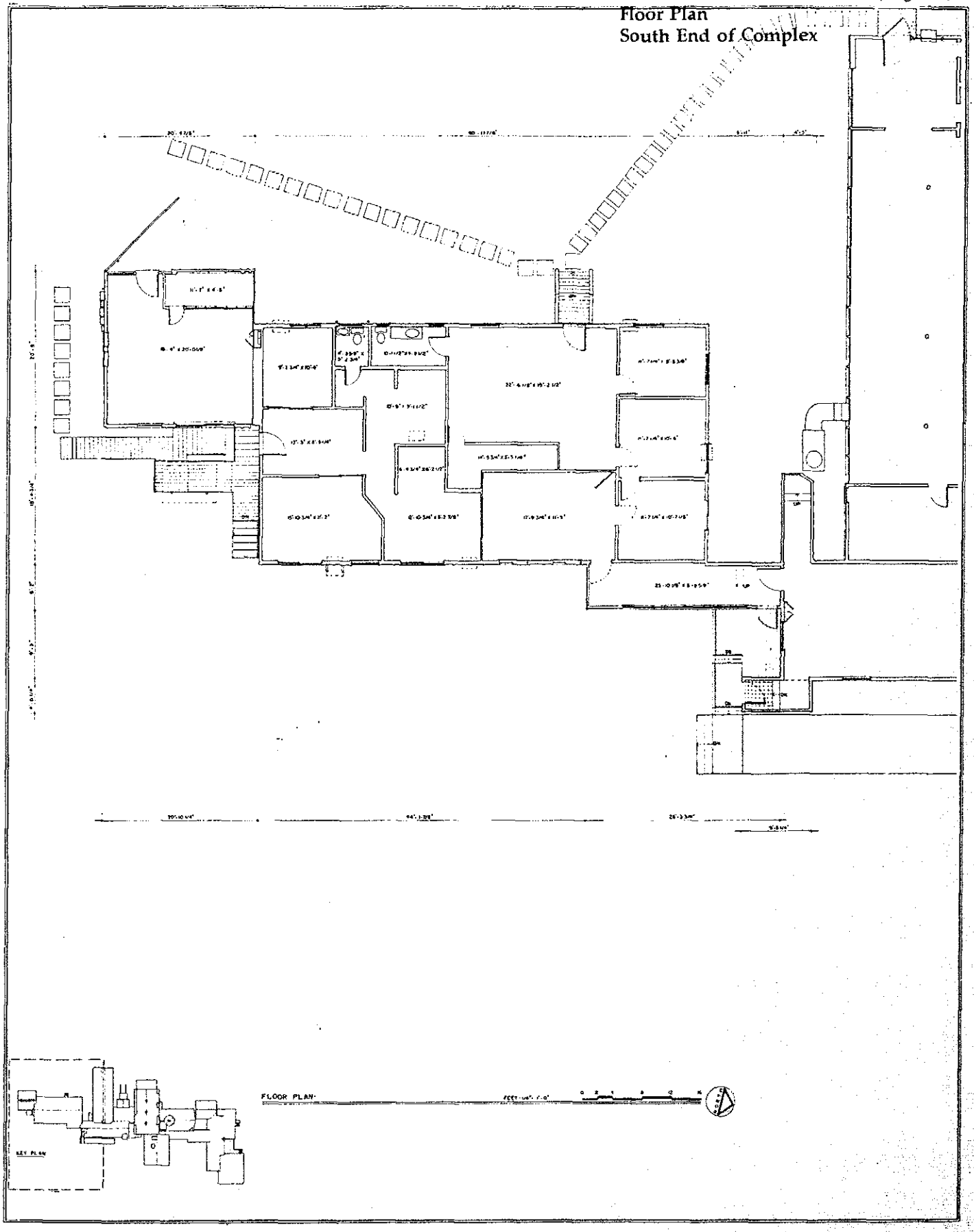
BUFFALO RANCH (Urbanus Square)
HABS No. CA-2395 (Page 32)
Floor Plan
North End of Complex



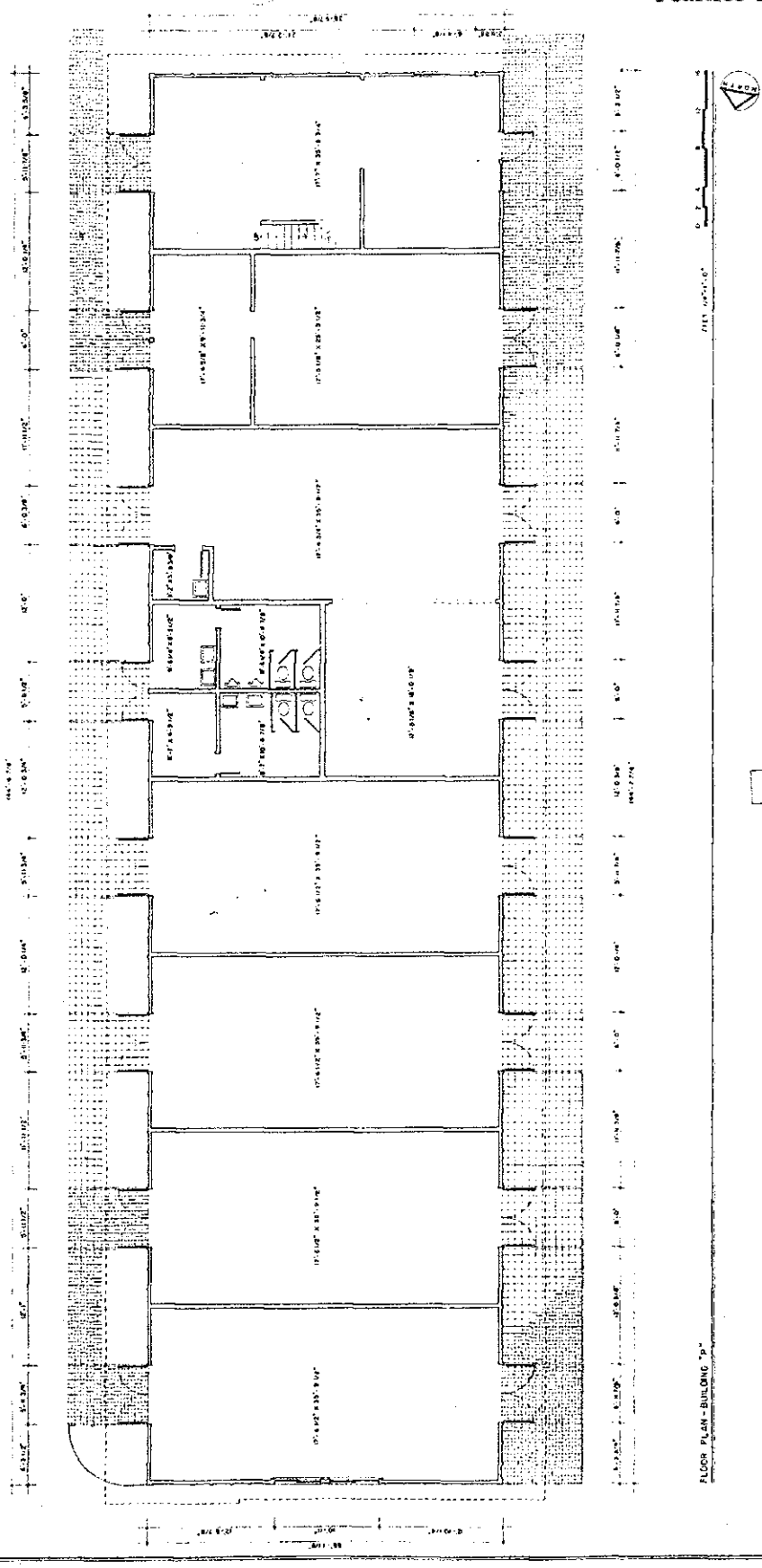
Floor Plan
Mid Section of Complex

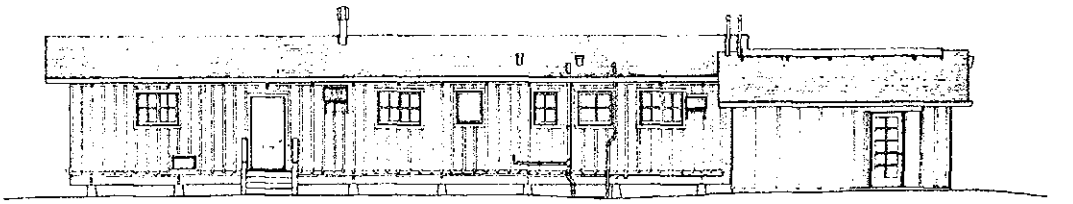


BUFFALO RANCH (Urbanus Square)
HABS No. CA- 2395 (Page 34)
Floor Plan
South End of Complex

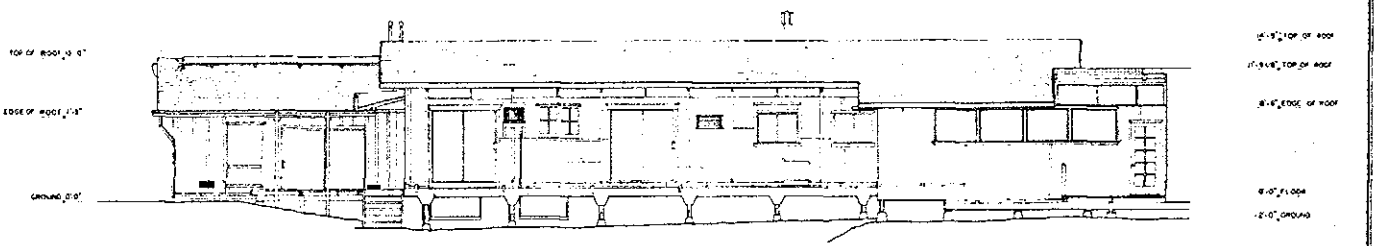


Floor Plan
Peartree Building (Building P)

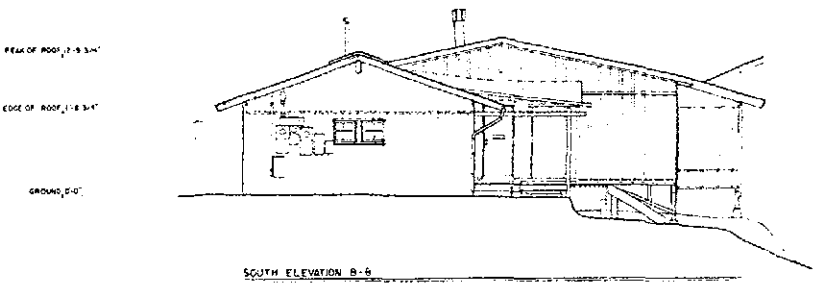




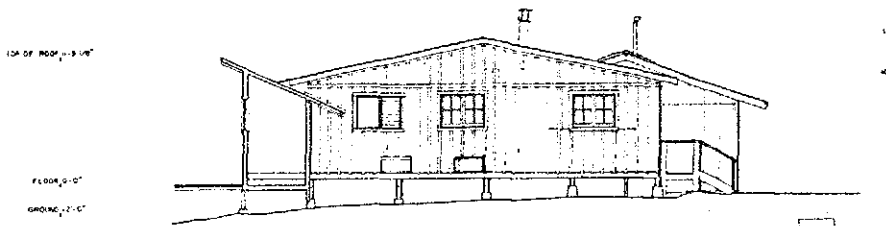
WEST ELEVATION D-D



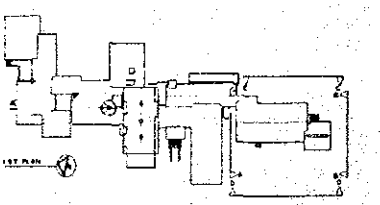
EAST ELEVATION C-C

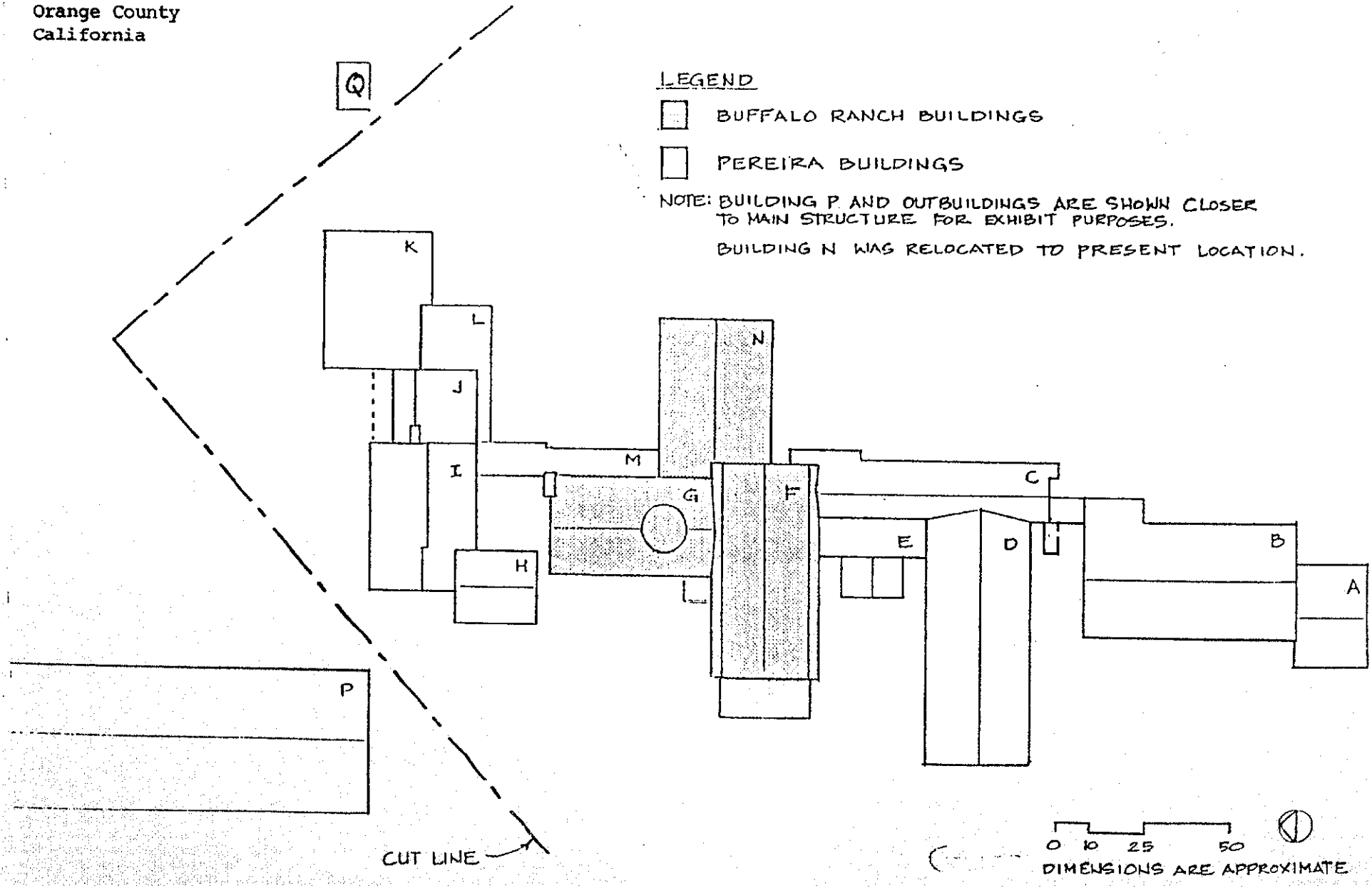


SOUTH ELEVATION B-B



NORTH ELEVATION A-A



Buffalo Ranch (Urbanus Square)
2418 MacArthur Boulevard
Irvine
Orange County
California

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